

COMM(UNITY) & THE NEW
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PARADIGM:

SHIFTING THE BALANCE OF RESPONS(USTAIN)ABILITY

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BACKGROUND

Over the past eighteen months, much has been written about the impact of the pandemic on tourism and reflecting on the issues of overtourism that characterised the pre-COVID era. Alongside this analysis has emerged a raft of predictions and forecasts about the nature, rate, and form of the recovery, regrowth, and re-imagining of tourism over the next ten years or so (Burini ed, 2020; Dieke, King and Sharpley, 2020; Simmons et al, 2021). Now all of this crystal ball gazing has been further knocked by the fast-emerging perfect storm (Figure 1). In this situation, as never before, we are all dwellers on the threshold – the title of a song written and recorded by the Northern Ireland musician, Van Morrison. In the forward to Lit Up Inside: The Selected Lyrics of Van Morrison (2014), Ian Rankin writes, ‘*Morrison is talking for all of us, poised throughout our lives between what we have already experienced and what may lie ahead.*’

FIGURE 1: TOURISM – FACING THE PERFECT STORM

AN INDUSTRY FACING THE PERFECT STORM

- COVID, WAR & REFUGEES**
- STAFF SHORTAGES & HIGHER WAGES**
- INFLATION, RECESSION, & COST OF LIVING**
- DE-CARBONISATION & SUSTAINABILITY**
- CHANGING MARKET DEMANDS, MOTIVATIONS & EXPECTATIONS**
- LIFESTYLE: WORK / LIFE BALANCE**
- DOMESTIC v INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS**

The future trajectory of the recovery, re-growth and reimaging of tourism is full of uncertainty. Indeed, the only certainty in tourism is uncertainty. So how do destination management organisations (DMOs) respond?

The past year or so has challenged us all to step away from the traditional destination development and tourism business models that have held good in the past but whose fragilities have been cruelly highlighted by the pandemic. COVID19, in particular, has all too often exposed the emptiness of destination slogans, the silliness of destination branding, and the inability of many DMOs to respond effectively. At the same time COVID19 has amplified a new imperative for DMOs - the importance of the way a destination behaves and how they manage their place, their people and, ultimately, their reputations. Reputation management has now become more important than traditional product and performance management. It is no longer about volume and value (Figure 2).

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